

political parties and from the civil wars with which the century closed, for these troubles came to a head only because Richard the Second was but a boy at the beginning and a fool at the end of his reign. Such evils could have been averted by an experienced and popular monarch. But the Black Prince, although he might have given an appearance of peace to the political world, could not have cut off the evils of society at their root, by destroying the power of the nobles and breaking up their private armies of retainers. He might, like Henry the Fifth, have given a superficial appearance of prosperity for a time; but the deluge which passed over England in the next century could only have been postponed, not averted.

Although the death of the Black Prince removed a security for the permanence of the work of the Good Parliament after the session was over, the Commons, as long as they remained assembled at Westminster, were able to continue their undertaking and defy the Duke. They instantly took steps to ensure the succession of Eichard, whom they compelled the King to produce in Parliament and to acknowledge as heir.<sup>1</sup> The Duke, determined at least to obtain the reversion of the Crown in case of his nephew's early death, appeared in the Chapter House among the assembled Commons, and boldly asked them to provide for such a case by passing a Salic law which would have excluded the Earl of March.\* As the latter was sitting with the Commons as one of the associated Lords, he was presumably present when the request was made; there is small wonder that it was refused. The relations of the Duke and the Earl were henceforth of no friendly character. The succession of one would have been the death-warrant of the other. Civil war was a practical certainty if Richard the Second died young.

The last prosecution was that of Alice Ferrers. Very little is known of this lady. She appears to have been of gentle birth, although her enemies tried to prove the opposite. Ever since 1366 she had been receiving grants of land and money from her royal lover, till at last in 1378 the King gave

<sup>1</sup> *Hot. JPorZ.*, ii, 830, sec. 50.

\* *Chron, Ang*^ 92.